



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Eastern District of Wisconsin*

517 East Wisconsin Avenue

414 / 297-1700

Milwaukee, WI 53202

TTY 414 / 297-1088

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NEWS SUMMARY:

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT MOVES TO REVOKE U.S. CITIZENSHIP OF FORMER NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMP GUARD

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Christopher A. Wray, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Criminal Division, today announced that the Justice Department has asked a federal court in Milwaukee to revoke the U.S. citizenship of a Racine, Wisconsin resident for participating in acts of persecution against civilians, including a notorious massacre of some 7,000 Jewish prisoners in Nazi-occupied Poland. The persecution occurred while the defendant served during World War II as an armed SS Death's Head guard at Nazi concentration camps and a forced labor camp.

In a complaint filed today, the Criminal Division's Office of Special Investigations (OSI) and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Wisconsin allege that Josias Kumpf, 78, who was born in what is now Serbia and Montenegro, entered the Nazi Waffen SS in October 1942 and served as an armed guard in the SS Death's Head battalion (Totenkopf-Wachbataillon) at the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp near Berlin until October 1943. Political prisoners, Jews, and other civilians were confined at Sachsenhausen under appalling conditions, and thousands of prisoners died there from starvation, gassing, shooting, and other causes.

According to the complaint, Kumpf was transferred in October 1943 to the Trawniki Training Camp in Nazi-occupied Poland. During an operation assigned the macabre code name "Operation Harvest Festival" (Aktion Erntefest), some 7,000 Jewish men, women, and children were shot to death at the adjacent Trawniki labor camp in a single day, November 3, 1943. Documents filed with the complaint allege that, during a March 2003 interview with Justice Department personnel, Kumpf admitted he "served as an armed guard during the shooting of prisoners" at Trawniki, and said his role during the shooting was to guard the camp "so the prisoners could not escape."

The complaint alleges that Kumpf remained at Trawniki until February 1944, and that he served as an armed guard under the authority of the Majdanek, Buchenwald, and Mittelbau concentration camps from February 1944 until at least November 1944.

Kumpf entered the United States in 1956 and became a U.S. citizen in 1964. The complaint asserts that his citizenship should be revoked because his wartime service to Nazi Germany rendered him ineligible for a U.S. immigration visa, and because he lied about that service when he applied for both a visa and U.S. citizenship.

“During the Aktion Erntefest massacre, Jewish prisoners were forced to strip naked and lie on the corpses of other prisoners before they too were shot to death, while trucks with speakers played loud music to drown out the screams of the victims. No person who participated in such a shocking act of brutality should enjoy the privilege of U.S. citizenship,” said OSI Director Eli M. Rosenbaum.

“These cases are important reminders of the atrocities that were committed during World War II,” said Steven Biskupic, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin. “We commend the work of the OSI personnel and look forward to working with them to ensure that justice is done in this matter.”

The proceedings initiated today are a result of OSI’s ongoing efforts to identify, investigate, and take legal action against former participants in Nazi persecution who reside in the United States. Since OSI began operations in 1979, 73 individuals who assisted in Nazi persecution have been stripped of U.S. citizenship and 59 such persons have been removed from the United States. In addition, more than 160 individuals who sought to enter the country in recent years have been blocked from doing so as a result of OSI’s “Watchlist” program.

Members of the public are reminded that the complaint contains only allegations. It will be the government’s burden to prove the allegations by clear, unequivocal and convincing evidence.

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For more information contact:

Matthew V. Richmond, Assistant United States Attorney
Francie Wendelborn, Public Affairs Liaison

414-297-1700